

The President's Weekly Address *February 28, 2009*

Two years ago, we set out on a journey to change the way that Washington works. We sought a Government that served not the interests of powerful lobbyists or the wealthiest few, but the middle class Americans I met every day in every community along the campaign trail, responsible men and women who are working harder than ever, worrying about their jobs, and struggling to raise their families. In so many town halls and backyards, they spoke of their hopes for a Government that finally confronts the challenges that their families face every day, a Government that treats their tax dollars as responsibly as they treat their own hard-earned paychecks.

That's the change I promised as a candidate for President. It is the change the American people voted for in November. And it is the change represented by the budget I sent to Congress this week.

During the campaign, I promised a fair and balanced Tax Code that would cut taxes for 95 percent of working Americans, roll back the tax breaks for those making over \$250,000 a year, and end the tax breaks for corporations that ship our jobs overseas. This budget does that.

I promised an economy run on clean, renewable energy that will create new American jobs, new American industries, and free us from the dangerous grip of foreign oil. This budget puts us on that path, through a market-based cap on carbon pollution that will make renewable energy the profitable kind of energy, through investments in wind power and solar power, advanced biofuels, clean coal, and more fuel-efficient American cars and American trucks.

I promised to bring down the crushing cost of health care, a cost that bankrupts one American every 30 seconds, forces small businesses to close their doors, and saddles our Government with more debt. This budget keeps that promise, with a historic commitment to reform that will lead to lower costs and quality, affordable health care for every American.

I promised an education system that will prepare every American to compete, so Americans can win in a global economy. This budget will

help us meet that goal, with new incentives for teacher performance and pathways for advancement, new tax credits that will make college more affordable for all who want to go, and new support to ensure that those who do go finish their degree.

This budget also reflects the stark reality of what we've inherited, a trillion dollar deficit, a financial crisis, and a costly recession. Given this reality, we'll have to be more vigilant than ever in eliminating the programs we don't need in order to make room for the investments we do need. I promised to do this by going through the Federal budget page by page and line by line. That's a process we have already begun, and I am pleased to say that we've already identified 2 trillion dollars worth of deficit reductions over the next decade. We've also restored a sense of honesty and transparency to our budget, which is why this one accounts for spending that was hidden or left out under the old rules.

I realize that passing this budget won't be easy. Because it represents real and dramatic change, it also represents a threat to the status quo in Washington. I know that the insurance industry won't like the idea that they'll have to bid competitively to continue offering Medicare coverage, but that's how we'll help preserve and protect Medicare and lower health care costs for American families. I know that banks and big student lenders won't like the idea that we're ending their huge taxpayer subsidies, but that's how we'll save taxpayers nearly \$50 billion and make college more affordable. I know that oil and gas companies won't like us ending nearly \$30 billion in tax breaks, but that's how we'll help fund a renewable energy economy that will create new jobs and new industries. In other words, I know these steps won't sit well with the special interests and lobbyists who are invested in the old ways of doing business, and I know they're gearing up for a fight as we speak. My message to them is this: So am I.

The system we have now might work for the powerful and well-connected interests that have run Washington for far too long, but I don't. I work for the American people. I didn't come

here to do the same thing we've been doing or to take small steps forward, I came to provide the sweeping change that this country demanded when it went to the polls in November. That is the change this budget starts to make, and that is the change I'll be fighting for in the weeks ahead—change that will grow our economy, expand our middle class, and keep the American Dream alive for all those men

and women who have believed in this journey from the day it began.

Thanks for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at approximately 4:35 p.m. on February 27 in the Library at the White House for broadcast on February 28. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 27 but was embargoed for release until 6 a.m. on February 28.

Remarks on the Nomination of Governor Kathleen Sebelius To Be Secretary of Health and Human Services and Nancy-Ann DeParle To Be Director of the White House Office for Health Reform

March 2, 2009

The President. Hello, everybody. Last week, I unveiled a fiscal blueprint for America's future, one that reflects the stark reality of our financial crisis while laying a lasting foundation for our common prosperity. It makes both the sacrifices and the investments necessary to tackle the great challenges of our time, challenges we face today as a consequence of decisions we deferred yesterday. And one of these great challenges is health care.

The good news is that we have already done more to advance the cause of health care reform in the last month than we have in the last decade. We've provided and protected health insurance for 11 million children whose parents work full time. We've invested in preventive care to help keep people from having to go to the doctor in the first place, and in electronic health records and new technology that will ensure privacy while saving billions of dollars and countless lives.

And today I can announce that under the recovery plan we've put into action, \$155 million will go toward supporting 126 new health centers across America. These health centers will expand access to care by helping people in need—many with no health insurance—obtain access to comprehensive primary and preventive health care services. That helps relieve the burden on emergency rooms across the country, which have become primary care clinics for too many who lack coverage, often at tax-

payer expense. This action will create thousands of new jobs, help provide health care to an estimated 750,000 low-income Americans across the country, and take another important step toward affordable, accessible health care for all.

But our current economic crisis has only heightened the urgency of our health care challenge. In the last 8 years, premiums have grown four times faster than wages. In each of these years, 1 million Americans have lost their health insurance. The crushing cost of health care causes a bankruptcy in America every 30 seconds; and by the end of this year, it could cause 1.5 million Americans to lose their homes. It's a crisis punishing families, battering businesses, squeezing our States, and increasingly, imperiling our own budget. Health care is one of the fastest-growing expenses in the Federal budget, and it's one we simply cannot sustain.

That is why we cannot fail to act yet again. If we're going to help families, save businesses, and improve the long-term economic health of our Nation, we must realize that fixing what's wrong with our health care system is no longer just a moral imperative, but a fiscal imperative. Health care reform that reduces costs while expanding coverage is no longer just a dream we hope to achieve, it's a necessity we have to achieve.